

# South Dakota National Guard

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## NEWS RELEASE:

### **Soldiers and Airmen work together in joint force operations**

Spc. Andrew Turner  
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

VERMILLION, S.D. - Members of the South Dakota National Guard joined forces this summer in southeast South Dakota in a state emergency that left hundreds of homes in danger of being flooded.

Both Army and Air Force personnel find themselves working side-by-side as they face the Missouri River in Dakota Dunes.

“We’ve had very few opportunities to work with our Air Force brethren,” said Army Capt. Heath Abraham, Madison, logistics officer with Headquarters, Headquarters Company 153rd Engineering Battalion. “The Airmen are out here sandbagging next to Soldiers and Soldiers and Airmen are working together on levee surveillance missions.”

Prior to arriving here, however, many of the Soldiers and Airmen never worked alongside the other. Abraham said that he has never worked with the Air Guard like this during his 13 years in the Army Guard.

Army Pvt. Ross Peterson, Wessington Springs, a combat engineer in the 153rd, said despite their differences both sides are eager to work together.

“People want to work together,” said Peterson. “We want to put all the differences aside as far as Air Guard or Army Guard.”

Combining the forces has not come without challenges, however.

Air Force Lt. Col. Larry DeBuhr, Canton, a medical administrative officer in the 114th Fighter Wing from Sioux Falls and daytime supervisor at the tactical operations center in Dakota Dunes during the flooding operations, said they met logistical challenges in transportation over the rough terrain of the field of operations.

“We didn’t have Humvee’s down here,” said DeBuhr. “We only had two-wheel drive vehicles to get over the mud.”

Working with the Army to solve this issue went well, said DeBuhr.

“They have been phenomenal,” said DeBuhr. “They have really been good to us about that.”

As this operation continues, those involved are looking forward to future operations together.

“It’s been a great experience working with them,” said Abraham. “It’s been a learning point for us and hopefully an opportunity to improve that in the future by having more joint operations or joint training events with them.”

Soldiers and Airmen work together to fight the threats of the Missouri River as the South Dakota National Guard operates in southeast South Dakota.

“We have the same state mission for mobilization under orders of the governor to come together and help the citizens and the communities of the state,” said Abraham. “It’s a true joint force structure.”

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